

Thom Yorke, main stage, Glastonbury, 1997: that spot of rain seems to have pushed him over the edge.



[01] RADIOHEAD

Glastonbury Festival, 28 June 1997

Faced with their first gig on home turf since the release of *OK Computer*, they emerged triumphant. But first they had to cope with a mud apocalypse, exploding speakers and a tantrum from Thom Yorke...

WORDS STEVE LOWE

ME: "Radiohead were always going to be the main headliners, they just wanted to do it, so there was no problem booking them."

CG: "Everyone seemed to have decided that *OK Computer* was going to be a big album. So there was a lot riding on that evening. It was akin to having a huge reception planned for you, regardless of what you feel you've done to deserve it."

TY: "We just kept saying to each other – it was like a mantra – just for an hour and a half, we're just going to walk on and provide music for people. We're very lucky to be asked to do it, and that's it. I just kept having these dreams. About tidal waves."

JH: "I arrived on the Glastonbury site on Wednesday night, and the clouds looked like they do before a flood. Then it started raining and you kept thinking it was going to stop. But it didn't – it just kept getting worse until by Friday it was a total quagmire. There were all kinds of calamities like the second stage sinking and Friday's bill being cancelled. Eight people were hospitalised with the E. coli virus after rolling around in the mud."

ME: "The rain had stopped by Saturday night when Radiohead came on. It was really wet underfoot and I was on my way to see Primal Scream, as they're one of my favourites. But I couldn't leave the field. I was absolutely spellbound."

TY: "It was hell, in the sense that you were playing into a black hole and yet you know that that black hole is 40,000 people, and you can't see one of them. Your worst nightmare. The lighting computer has blown up, and it's giving you burning white light strain into your retinas. Like you're being interrogated. It was the best day of my life and the worst day of my life. Without doubt."

KW: "I was laughing for the first two songs, it was unbelievable. It was surreal for me, a bit of an old hippy from Gloucester. To be there and see the band I'd worked with headlining was fantastic. Then I couldn't enjoy it. When they went into Talk Show Host I knew they were in trouble."

CH: "Thom's monitor went off after the second song and he couldn't hear a thing. On Talk Show Host he lost his cues and fucked up completely. It bumbled to a halt and I could tell he was close to walking off then. The whole thing started crashing down on me and I'm sure on Thom."

TY: "I was going to kill. If I'd found the guy who was running the PA system that day, I would've gone

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THOM YORKE

Radiohead singer

COLIN GREENWOOD

Radiohead bassist

ED O'BRIEN

Radiohead guitarist

MICHAEL LEAVIS

Festival organiser

JOHN HARRIS

Journalist and editor of 1997 Glastonbury Festival newspaper

KEITH WOZENCROFT

Former Radiohead A&R man and current head of Parlophone

CHRIS HUFFORD

Radiohead co-manager

backstage and throttled him... Thanks very much for fucking up my life up in front of all these people."

EO'B: "We had no idea what was going on [in the darkness]. It's one of the great moments of televised rock swearing, isn't it? Turn the fucking lights on! It's up there with Bob Geldof shouting. Give us your fucking money! on Live Aid. You've got to hand it to Thom. He does a good swear."

TY: "When we turned the lights on the audience, it suddenly dawned on me that actually everything was alright. That it didn't fucking matter whether the speakers blew up."

KW: "I walked further back and realised the audience was transfixed, and that was really exhilarating."

TY: "It was the most important hour and a half of our lives, and no fucker was going to take it away from us. There was a point where I did walk off, but I turned back. And then the fireworks went off. Literally. It was bonkers."

ME: "I saw Thom later on and gave him a hug and told him it was the most inspirational moment of the 30 years [of Glastonbury]. I think he was a bit taken aback."

TY: "[For a while] everything that happened after Glastonbury [was] a let-down. I've never ever felt like that... It wasn't a human feeling. It was something else completely."

WHAT THEY PLAYED

LUCKY
MY IRON LUNG
AIR BAG
PLANETTELX
EXIT MUSIC (FOR A FILM)
NICE INKMAN
THE BEADS
PARANOID ANDROID
KARMA POLICE
CREEP
CLIMBING UP THE WALLS
NO SURPRISES
TALK SHOW HOST
BONES
JUST
FAKE PLASTIC TREES
YOU
THE TOURIST
HIGH AND DRY
STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT)

"IT WAS THE
BEST DAY AND
THE WORST DAY
OF MY LIFE."

Thom Yorke